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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS_KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

Please note: no Tel Aviv Media Reaction report Tuesday,
April 27, 2004, Israel's Independence Day holiday.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [11. Israel's 56th Independence Day](#)
- [12. Mideast](#)

Key stories in the media:

All media highlighted events related to Israel's Memorial Day (commemorated from last night through this evening) and Israel's 56th Independence Day (celebrated from tonight through Monday night). Israel Radio reported that in his greetings to President Moshe Katsav, President Bush wrote that Israel can count on the friendship of the American people and on America's firm commitment to the well-being and security of Israel's citizens. The radio also cited greetings from French President Jacques Chirac and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who both expressed their wishes that the conflict be resolved (Mubarak mentioned the road map). All media cited data released by the GOI's Central Bureau of Statistics: Israel now counts 6.78 million residents -- 81 percent of them are Jews and 19 percent are Arabs.

A remark made by PM Sharon in an interview with Channel 2-TV Friday night dominated the headlines Sunday. Sharon told the TV station that he had informed Bush, during their meeting in Washington 10 days ago, that Israel was no longer bound by a pledge made three years ago not to harm PA Chairman Yasser Arafat. The comment was widely construed as a wink to the Likud members who will participate in Sunday's scheduled vote on the disengagement plan. All media reported that the U.S. Administration made clear over the weekend that it continues to oppose any Israeli action physically targeting Arafat. The media reported that National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice called Sharon's bureau head Dov Weisglass, and cited responses by Secretary Powell and the spokesmen of the National

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Security Council and the State Department. Maariv reported that Israel has conveyed a message to the PA that a terrorist attack on the scale of the 2002 Passover bombing in Netanya could bring about the assassination of Arafat.

All media reported that Sunday cabinet ministers Binyamin Netanyahu, Limor Livnat and Silvan Shalom refused to assist Sharon's campaign to muster support for his disengagement plan prior to Sunday's vote in the Likud. Yediot reported that Ohad Kamin, a member of the Likud Central Committee, published an article on the Internet site of the extreme-right movement "Jewish Leadership," led by Moshe Feiglin. Kamin's article contained an implicit call to take up arms against Sharon, "a most dangerous enemy of the Jewish people." Education Minister Limor Livnat has urged A-G Menachem Mazuz and Likud institutions to take steps against Kamin.

All media reported that a border policeman was killed and two were wounded last night when shots were fired at their jeep near Idna in the southern Hebron Hills. Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it was in retaliation for the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi. An hour later, an Israeli Arab was seriously wounded from shots fired at guards patrolling near the shooting

range at Migdal Oz near Efrat in Gush Etzion. Israel Radio cited the belief of defense sources that the second incident was not a terrorist attack. All media reported that Friday the security forces arrested three alleged members of a terrorist cell who reportedly murdered university student George Khoury in the north Jerusalem neighborhood of French Hill, and wounded another student a week ago.

Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian sources familiar with the inner workings of Hamas as saying that Dr. Mahmoud A-Zahar has been elected leader of the movement in the Gaza Strip. Ismail Haniyeh has reportedly been appointed as A-Zahar's deputy, while the new No. 3 in the Hamas hierarchy is Said A-Siam. Sunday, Maariv quoted Border Police commander David Tzur as saying that Israel has "excellent human intelligence" in the ranks of Hamas. This morning, Israel Radio cited an announcement by the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Ramallah that they executed a Palestinian who had collaborated with Israel.

Sunday, Jerusalem Post cited criticism by U.S. officials of the PA for failing to prevent the escape on Wednesday night of three Palestinians who were being held in a Gaza City prison of involvement in the attack on a U.S. diplomatic convoy last October.

Sunday, Jerusalem Post reported that a federal judge in Rhode Island denied a motion to dismiss a USD 250-million lawsuit against the PA and PLO for the 1996 murder of Yaron Ungar, a U.S. citizen who was killed with his wife Efrat by Hamas. In July, the court ordered Hamas to pay USD 116 million in damages.

Sunday, Yediot quoted the UN's special Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen as saying that the PA must start taking effective steps to stop violence and eliminate terror.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post reported that Sunday the High Court of Justice ruled that Palestinian journalists with permits to work in Israel will be able to get press accreditation from the Government Press Office (GPO). The ruling overturned a two-year-old government order denying press cards to Palestinian journalists.

Sunday, Jerusalem Post reported that last week in Dublin and Belfast Israeli lawmakers (from the Left and Shinui) and Palestinian leaders held separate meetings -- organized by the Irish Foreign Ministry -- with leaders from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Palestinian participants reportedly said they were under orders not to meet with the Israelis or discuss reconciliation between the two peoples.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel has decided to ask U.S. Judge Edward Korman to defer a decision, originally slated to be handed down in the next few days, over how to distribute hundreds of millions of dollars in reparations by Swiss banks to Holocaust survivors worldwide.

Jerusalem Post quoted Jan Willem Van der Hoeven, director of the International Christian Zionist Center in Jerusalem, and Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, as saying Sunday that evangelical Christians may be "very disappointed" in Israel's leaders if the country withdraws from part of the Land of Israel, but that they will not turn their back on Israel or the Jews. They were taking issue with remarks made by Herbert Zwiebon, chairman of Americans For a Safe Israel, who had warned about a possible evangelical anti-Semitic backlash if Israel withdraws from the territories.

Jerusalem Post reported that California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will arrive in Israel on Saturday. He will attend the groundbreaking ceremony of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Center of Human Dignity Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem.

11. Israel's 56th Independence Day:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Israel's willingness to adjust its own worldview -- to withdraw from territory and dismantle settlements -- is more than merely a message to the Palestinians, that they must also adopt a realistic world view." Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Despite its age, Israel

still lacks basic features of maturity.... Mainly: its residents do not have peace and quiet." Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Those who dismiss Israel as a temporary 'Crusader state' and assume that their brand of hatred and radicalism will outlast us do not understand a free society's strengths."

Block Quotes:

II. "Toward a Change in Outlook"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 26): "The fact that Memorial Day, which honors the soldiers who fell in Israel's wars, is the day before Independence Day stems from the history of the State of Israel. The longed-for independence exacted a high price in blood, which has been paid by thousands of soldiers and their families not only to achieve independence, but also to preserve it. Indeed the Zionist idea of establishing a state for the Jews, which has been recognized by the world's nations, is still not self-evident, especially in the region where the state is located.... Even though [recent] declarations [by Ariel Sharon] still await actual implementation, they constitute an ideological revolution that holds out the possibility that by its 57th Independence Day, Israel will stand at the dawn of a new era.... This is the reality that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been dictating already for decades. Its solution is complex, but not impossible. It must begin with a change in outlook by both sides. Israel's willingness to adjust its own worldview -- to withdraw from territory and dismantle settlements -- is more than merely a message to the Palestinians, that they must also adopt a realistic worldview. The adoption of realistic policies by both sides -- policies that reject the old ideologies, which served mainly to foment war -- may be the great contribution that this Memorial Day makes to next year's Memorial Day."

II. "Clinging to Hope"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 26): "In another four years the State of Israel will be 60 years old. Time for countries is not like time for people, but still, a 60-year-old country is no kid any more. It isn't an adolescent any more. Its first gray hairs have begun to show. Despite its age, Israel still lacks basic features of maturity. It still does not have final and recognized borders. It still does not have a capital city that is recognized by the world. It still does not have a constitution. And mainly: its residents do not have peace and quiet. Israel at 56 is a country whose sons and daughters love it despite what it is, not because of what it is. A year ago we were optimistic. New winds were blowing. Saddam Hussein had been easily defeated. Arafat had been pushed aside by a realistic Palestinian leadership.... A year has passed, a lot has happened in it, and yet so little. Objectively, one can say that it was not a bad year. The economy began to grow again. The critical section of the fence was built.... The terror organizations were dealt one blow after another.... But perhaps we need to change the definition of 'not a bad year.' How can a year be not bad when 185 security personnel and 137 civilians fell in a terrorist war? How can it be not bad when unemployment reached a record high? When poverty is record high? How can a year be okay when a heavy cloud of suspicion of corruption and bribery hovers over the prime minister? That is the paradox of Israel in its 56th year of independence: a country whose citizens are crazy about it, but where every second citizen believes it is heading in the wrong direction."

III. "Israel at 56"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (April 26): "Tonight, in that sharp transition that should earn Israel a patent, we switch from mourning our fallen soldiers to celebrating the nation they defended. There is plenty to celebrate. Israel is a success story. Against all odds, the Jewish people has a country in its own land, after 2,000 years of exile.... The Jewish national project has flourished, while the Arab choice of enmity with Israel has been the primary cover for neighboring states not to confront their own political and economic failings.... Our greatest success -- however ironically, given the way we have been vilified -- is not material but moral. Our enemies are consumed by hatred of us, and have attacked us with such barbarity that to call it war is

to dignify an offensive composed almost entirely of war crimes. Yet we have not thrown our democratic values out the window in the name of security, as illustrated both by the elaborate judicial review imposed on security policies and by the freedom given Arab Knesset members to vilify their country and side with its enemies. Most dramatically, we have sacrificed our own soldiers' lives to minimize civilian Palestinian casualties in ways that few, if any, democracies would under similar circumstances.... Those who dismiss Israel as a temporary 'Crusader state' and assume that their brand of hatred and radicalism will outlast us do not understand a free society's strengths."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Sharon's latest threat to strike at Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat came at a convenient time for all the parties involved.... it is also convenient for the U.S. Administration, which wants to show its Arab and European friends that it can restrain the 'neighborhood bully.'"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Gewirtz opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "To the Americans, Sharon behaved like a bull in a china shop.... Right now they expect him to go the extra mile for them."

Military correspondent Aryeh O'Sullivan wrote on page one of conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Whether or not Sharon is adopting the 'madman strategy' as a calculated policy or it comes naturally, the results have already borne fruit."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Matter of Timing"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 25): "Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's latest threat to strike at Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat came at a convenient time for all the parties involved. It is convenient for Sharon, who must present a hard line ahead of the Likud referendum on the disengagement and prove to his party members that he is not a sucker who caves in to terror and retreats from Gaza under fire. It is convenient for Arafat, who loves the role of victim and martyr and uses it to enlist renewed support from the Palestinian public. And it is also convenient for the U.S. Administration, which wants to show its Arab and European friends that it can restrain the 'neighborhood bully' and does not automatically support Sharon's every bullying whim.... These restraints may loosen under certain conditions, especially if a serious terrorist attack occurs that can be tied to Arafat, for instance, if the Tanzim is held responsible. In that case, pressure would mount in Israel to implement the resolution to remove Arafat. The political timing would be critical -- for example, if Bush loses the presidential elections in November and the administration enters a transition period of two and a half months until his successor enters office."

II. "A Private Hit"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Gewirtz opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 25): "The Prime Minister announced over the weekend that he told President Bush that he regarded himself as free of his commitment to refrain from harming Arafat physically. This time, unlike the precedent of the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi, the American response was quick, insulted and harsh. Sharon, according to the Americans, is crudely transgressing the rules of diplomatic discourse and also putting them at risk.... Beyond that, the Americans are saying angrily, after we went the extra mile for Sharon, we did not expect him to pay us back by making an announcement that increases even more the great risks we already cope with on an international level. What kind of logic motivated Sharon now, after government spokesmen and the security establishment have already announced that no Palestinian leader Israel views as directly responsible for terror is immune anymore, to publicize such a declaration

regarding Arafat and hang it like a millstone around the President's neck? To the Americans, Sharon behaved like a bull in a china shop, kicking over the pitcher of milk he received from Bush with his statement. Right now they expect him to go the extra mile for them. Dov Weisglass, who garnered praise for obtaining the understandings between Sharon and Bush and for Sharon's actual visit, which had been delayed for months, will need his full supply of verbal effects in order to ensure that both Sharon and Bush get out of this mess looking good."

III. "Trying Out Our 'Madman Theory'"

Military correspondent Aryeh O'Sullivan wrote on page one of conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (April 25): "If you are going to apply the madman theory, or try to convince the other side you are a 'loose cannon,' then you need to back it up with a true threat.... The manner in which the Sharon-Mofaz government has been behaving, with its unabashed willingness to assassinate and go anywhere, was creating the sense of a loose cannon in Jerusalem. It appears to be working. On Thursday rumors ran rampant in Ramallah that the IDF was planning to storm Arafat's battered headquarters where fugitives were hiding. Arafat quickly expelled 21 of the fugitives, who will likely be hunted down and arrested in the coming weeks by Israeli security forces. The IDF has said that it is prepared to launch a raid against Arafat himself. All it needs are the orders. Whether or not Sharon is adopting the 'madman strategy' as a calculated policy or it comes naturally, the results have already borne fruit."

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